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ON THE SET OF BATMAN FOREVER

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FOREVER B

Val Kilmer's caped crusade to ri
Two-Face and the Ridd

By A.C.

ARK KNIGHT

d Gotham City of the scourge of
ller begins this summer

Ferrante

[Read with a William Dozier monotone recitation]: A cold early February chill has enshrouded Gotham City as the good citizens go about their daily business. But wait, what is this? A man whom fate has dealt a dubious double deck of decadence? A green garbed no-goodnick who wants his revenge on the caped crusader. Can it be? Stay tuned.

Indeed, a cold early February chill has enshrouded Gotham City, only it's the ***Batman Forever*** set on the Warner Bros. lot in Burbank. Extras dressed in scanty outfits roam around searching for warmth through the plethora of high wattage bulbs currently lighting up the backlot...and Aunt Harriet is nowhere to be seen.

In less ritzy days, this neighborhood was known as Hennesey Street, but tonight it's been transformed into glorious downtown Gotham City.

Amid the numerous neon signs, large statues of eight-story-high bronze men holding up various city structures and a familiar set of golden arches—curiously integrated into the set for optimum product placement—this third go-around of the popular Dark Knight series is getting a major face-lift.

Gone is the dark, foreboding production design of the two Tim Burton-directed films. Though the sets are still impressive by anyone's standards, there's still something a bit "commercial" about this new approach, something that the film's director, Joel Schumacher, admits was intentional.

"They call these things comic books—they're not called tragic books—so we're trying to make a living comic book here," says Schumacher, whose other genre credits include ***The Lost Boys*** and ***Flatliners***. "We basically went back to the original legends that Bob Kane created. The Harvey Dent/Two-Face legend is intact from the comic book, the Riddler originally starts off as Edward Nygma and Dick Grayson is an acrobat and his family dies in the circus."

Even Bob Kane, who wasn't very vocal during the first two films, has given Schumacher the symbolic thumbs up—apparently with only two reservations.

"He doesn't like the earring I've given Dick Grayson—he just doesn't understand that," says Schumacher. "He also doesn't like that I've put nipples on the Batman costume. He said 'Joel, why did it have to be nipples on the suit?'"

Of course the change of direction is also reflected in the new occupant to the bat-throne. With Michael Keaton bowing out early, citing "creative differences," the younger Val Kilmer has pretty effortlessly assumed the dual-character cloak of Bruce Wayne/Batman, while also bringing a much lighter edge to the character than the stone-faced Keaton incarnation.

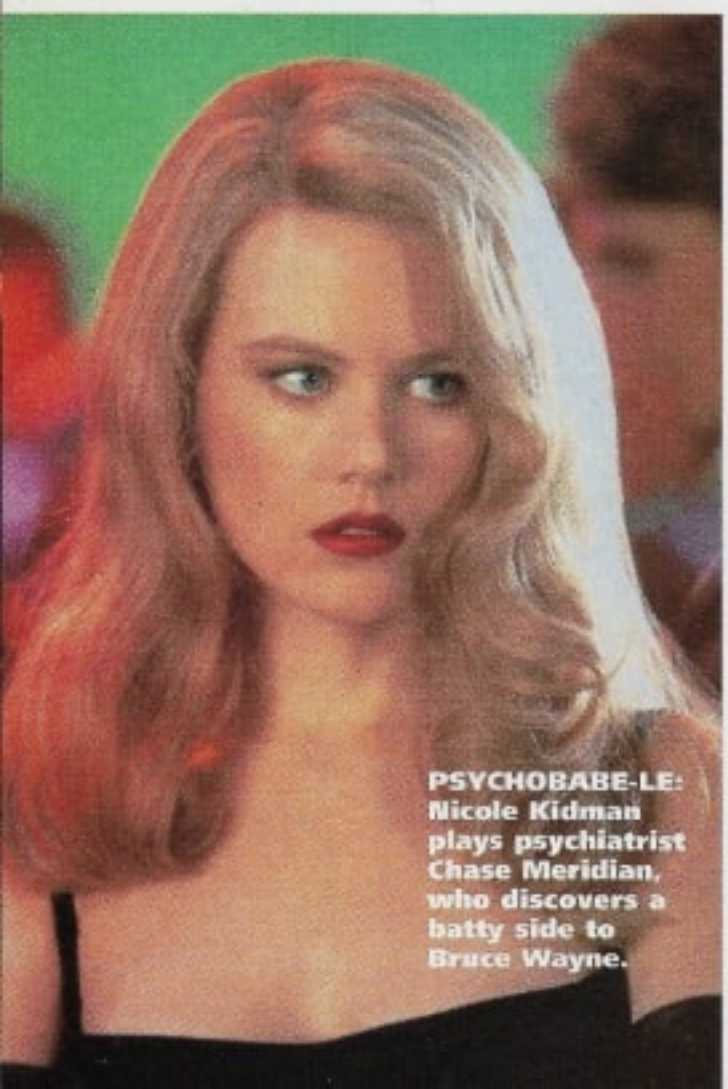
"I think when you have a 34-year-old hero, it's going to be lighter because you have to be as old as me to really be dark and brooding," laughs Schumacher. "You figure Bruce Wayne's parents were killed when he was ten, Val is still a young man and he's not had as many years to brood around about the matter.

BAT OUT OF HELL: Val Kilmer is the dark knight. ▶ Tommy Lee Jones is D.A. Dent turned Two Face.

So I also wanted to make it fun. It's a summer movie and we all know that it should be fun, like a comic book."

And it's fun that ***Batman Forever*** promises to deliver with the wild array of new additions to the bat-clan. Why else hire 1994's newly crowned box-office heavyweight champion Jim Carrey to put on the lime-colored Riddler duds and offer up more of his one-man freak-show. The best part?—Jack Nicholson and Danny DeVito needed make up to become the grotesque caricatures that frightened millions of children across the nation. All Carrey has to do is contort his face.

Adhering to the ***Batman*** legend, Carrey plays Edward Nygma, a lowly techno-nerd at Wayne Enterprises whose new mind-sucking invention is shrugged off by the powerful Bruce Wayne, whom Nygma admires. Seeking revenge, Nygma uses the invention on



PSYCHOBABE-LE: Nicole Kidman plays psychiatrist Chase Meridian, who discovers a batty side to Bruce Wayne.

himself and is transformed into the mind-numbing genius known as The Riddler.

Adding to the one-two villainous punch is Tommy Lee Jones, who appears as former district attorney Harvey Dent (played by Billy Dee Williams in the first ***Batman*** film) turned Two-Face.

The remaining new faces include Chris O'Donnell as Boy Wonder Robin and Nicole Kidman, who offers up a romantic love interest to Wayne as a beautiful psychiatrist who is attracted more to Batman than to the troubled Wayne, who is the one who initially whisks her off her feet.

With all these new stories being developed (said to be why Keaton dropped out), what's a caped crusader going to do for his own story?

"I've had large ensemble casts of beautiful people before, so that's very comfortable territory for me," says Schumacher. "And a lot of my movies have been ensemble movies with a lot of stories going on. ***St. Elmo's Fire*** is about seven people and ***Flatliners*** is also an ensemble story. So I haven't made a lot of one- or two-person stories—I'm very comfortable with this. I think it makes it more interesting for the audience, because every time you cut, there's something else going on."

For ***Batman Forever***, the shooting schedule has been a long and involved one. Principal photography commenced in early October and wrapped in March. Additionally, editors have been working diligently around the clock completing sequences as soon as they're shot, in order to ready the film for its June 17th release-date.

"We're coming down towards the end—in three weeks we'll be done," says Schumacher, obviously still in good spirits, although another all-nighter is already in the works for the seasoned director. "'I've always been lucky to have great casts. I wish they were all working tonight, because you'd see how great they are in their costumes. Right now we just have this sequence, some more stuff in the batcave, some more scenes at Wayne manor and the circus and then we'll be all done."

The sequence being shot this evening features young Dick Grayson (O'Donnell), orphaned when his acrobatic parents are killed and now a ward of Bruce Wayne (who feels a kinship and guilt that he wasn't able to save Grayson's parents from death either). Not surprisingly, Grayson has gotten used to the hip gadgets Batman has and, like any teenager would, takes the Batmobile out on a little joyride cruise. Nevertheless, he's no Batman and in an attempt to save a damsel in distress, Grayson gets himself in over his head.

This being a movie-set however, and the beginning of a very long night, not much exciting is happening. O'Donnell is simply driving the fully operational Batmobile up and down the city street for a master shot. The real action will no doubt happen much later, in the wee hours of the morning.

"They call these things comic books, they're not called tragic books so we're trying to make a living comic book here." - Director Joel Schumacher

uring filming, a minor fender-bender occurs on one of the early takes. Apparently, O'Donnell's "stop" cue was a little late and he ends up in a little bat-crash into the side of one of the sets. It's a low-speed collision with no injuries, just a minor scratch on the front of the Batmobile, taken care of with a little paint. However, this little accident continues to be a running joke throughout the evening with Schumacher clutching his assistant director during the next take in mock fear as the ominous-looking vehicle heads toward them.

"Things are going a lot smoother than I thought they would," says Schumacher. "I thought it would be like climbing Mount Everest and 'what have I gotten myself into?' It's been crazy, but it's been fun. I've never had this long a schedule. Although ***Lost Boys*** and ***Flatliners*** had special effects in them, most of them were in camera and we had a very small budget and very little time. I think those movies look good but they were just spit and polish. We have big things to do here. There's flying and mid-air things."

While the original Bat-auteur, Tim

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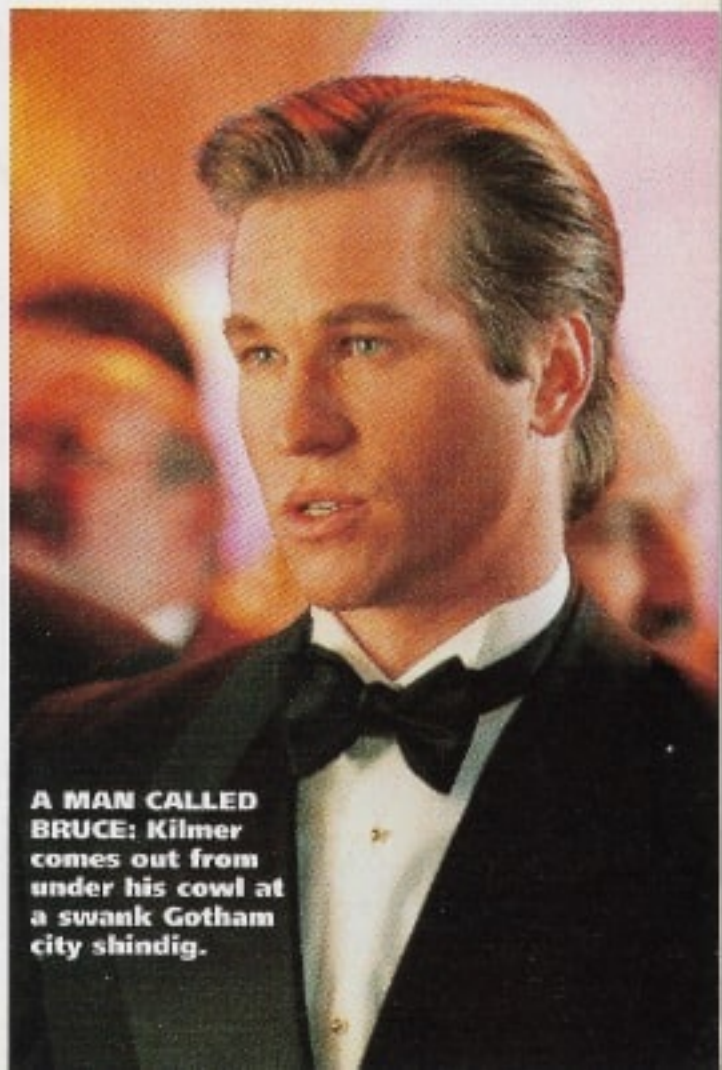

A MAN CALLED BRUCE: Kilmer comes out from under his cowl at a swank Gotham city shindig.

Burton has stepped off to the sidelines, co-producing the film with Peter MacGregor-Scott, his involvement and input have been minimal at best. Much like the production distancing itself from Burton's playfully macabre wonder-land, Burton has not made his presence felt much on set, giving the studio carte blanche to re-invent ***Batman*** in someone else's vision.

"Tim has been real supportive of me," says Schumacher. "He was doing ***Ed Wood*** while we were preparing this and was living in New York for a lot of the time. When they first offered it to me, the first thing I said is 'I'll do it if Tim wants me to,' because we've been friends since ***Lost Boys*** and I really love him. I think he's great and a genius. So I went to see Tim who said, 'Yes, please do it.'"

Oddly enough, many sources on set explain that ***Batman Forever*** is not really a sequel but rather a re-invention of the ***Batman*** lore in an attempt to wash away the bat-lash ***Batman Returns*** got from parents who felt the film was too frightening for their children.

"Michael Gough is still playing

Alfred and Pat Hingle is still playing Commissioner Gordon but you have to start fresh when you're the new director," says Schumacher. "You can't really figure out what another director did right or wrong. You have to follow your own instincts. That's what you're hired for. You have to take a lot of risks when you take on something that's already known."

As the night wears on, the expansive crew is not even aware of another DC Comic icon currently shooting simultaneously, under much more modest conditions, on the Warner lot—Superman. Yes, ***Lois and Clark—The New Adventures of Superman*** is currently finishing another episode of the occasionally inventive series that also re-tooled popular lore for a savvy new Generation Eeuchh audience. But whereas ***Superman*** has always had a whimsical edge to it, Schumacher notes that even with the revamping currently being carried out on the ***Batman*** franchise, the caped crusader will forever remain the Dark Knight.

"There will always be a dark edge to *Batman* because I think that's part of what makes him unique," says Schumacher. "He's a superhero who really isn't a superhero. He's an ordinary man and he doesn't have super powers. He's a real person, so to speak, whose parents were killed in front of him and he goes out to become a vigilante wearing this suit. We've tried to deal with that and with the mythic origins of Batman, his childhood and what the bat stands for."

Of course, it doesn't take the Riddler to know what the bat truly stands for in the eyes of the studio—$300 million worldwide gross.

BOND FOREVER?

The gentleman agent with a license to kill (and thrill) returns with a new facelift too.

James Bond has been around for quite a while now and has undergone more 'plastic surgery' than the entire cast of ***Dynasty***. Sean, Roger, Timothy, even David and George have had a stab at playing the secret agent. And now there's a new kid on the block, Pierce Brosnan.

"There's a vulnerability to him now and the heroines are more independent," says Brosnan, who recently began filming the newest Bond installment, ***Goldeneye***, trying to pinpoint the new '90s Bond. "People ask, 'how are you going to make a Bond for the '90s?' Well, from an actor's point of view, it's got to be 'How do you make it real?'

"How do you breathe life into something that's become a period-piece in some respects. That's my springboard into the character. People ask me if I'm nervous. Well yes, absolutely terrified! I don't want to screw it up!"

ON GOLDEN BOND: Pierce Brosnan assumes the role of 007 while Famke Janssen stars as Xenia and Desmond Llewellyn returns as the ever-reliable Q.

Brosnan was first earmarked for the role in the mid-'80s. His success in the TV detective show ***Remington Steele*** was seen as a strong indicator that he could take over the role of James Bond and make it his own. Ironically, it was that TV show that prevented him from essaying the part. The moguls of the TV world knew that the casting of Brosnan in the Bond role would only help promote the ***Steele*** series, something Bond mogul Cubby Broccoli found unacceptable, leading him to cast Timothy Dalton in the coveted role.

By 1994, ***Remington Steele*** was a distant memory and there was nothing (except contract negotiations) to prevent Brosnan, the number-one favorite, from landing the part.

"June 1st 1994 at 12:30 in the afternoon." says Brosnan recalling exactly when he officially got the part. "I've signed for three movies. I've been a fan of Bond since 1964 when I saw the first film. I leave it up to the audience to judge who's the best Bond. For me, Sean [Connery] was the quintessential James Bond. With Roger Moore, it was definitely hats off to him for taking the role over and continuing it."

Goldeneye promises to offer a truly international flavor to the character, with Brosnan reassuring fans who are worried that the character will lose that reassuring and distinctly suave, British air.

"An Irish actor, a Swiss watch, an Italian suit, but the socks are from Selfridges and the underpants are Marks and Spencer," he laughs.

Other members of the cast include a new, female 'M' in the form of Dame Judi Dench, Sean Bean (***Patriot Games*** and the upcoming ***A Pint O'Bitter***, executive-produced by *Highlander* Chris Lambert) as Bond's friend-turned-nemesis, 006, Famke Janssen (***Lord of Illusions***) as Xenia. The aptly-named Samantha Bond takes over the role of trusty Miss Moneypenny.

Also joining the cast is Robbie Coltrane, fresh from the groundbreaking and hugely popular television series *Cracker*, arguably one of the best British TV drama series to be shown in the last decade.

Says Coltrane good-naturedly, "They had to do a lot of make up for me, because I was just too damn handsome and Pierce felt a bit threatened."

—John Mosby

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